



RICK MCKEE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE FOUNDATION

What is your role in The Foundation?

I'm Chief Executive, which means I'm responsible for running the company overall and how we perform as a business. That said, running a company like The Foundation is a massive team effort, and I'm really lucky that we've a cracking team here.

What has been career your journey?

I went to Ulster Uni, studied Business Studies and hadn't a baldy clue what I wanted to be when I grew up – still don't.

My first proper job was in 1992 in a company that printed cigarette boxes, when they were still allowed to have nice classy elegant designs on them. My job was basically 'office helper'. I got to spend time in sales, production, dispatch, and IT, and I guess it gave me a solid understanding that different people can have a very different lens on the same set of facts!

I then spent 17 years running a digital agency called Tibus, growing it from 2 people in 1996 to be the largest digital agency in Ireland at the time, when it was bought by UTV Media plc. When the company was small, I was involved in doing pretty much everything, including selling, planning, project management, designing, writing, solving, etc – I just had to get stuck in and learn as I went along. I left UTV in 2013 and joined a small consulting business helping companies to develop their strategies and their key people, before joining The Foundation in 2017.

Since 1996 I've had responsibility for teams and people and making businesses work. I made lots of mistakes as a young manager, and I continue to make lots of mistakes as an old manager, but hopefully different mistakes! I love working with people and trying to help stuff get better every day. A big part of my role is to make sure everyone has what they need to be brilliant in their role.

What other types of work have shaped your career?

I LOVE working outside – manual labour (but I never get paid!). I'm a better dismantler than I am a builder, but anything that involves getting stuck in with my hands and back and not much thought, I'm generally enthusiastic about, whether it's demolition, digging, mowing, tree-felling, whatever. As well as enthusiasm, I love to see a job well finished; traits that I THINK I bring into work.

Quickfire Questions

What do you do in your free time?

Apart from the manual labour stuff, I love planning and going on expeditions in the mountains and being self-sufficient, and I'm equally happy to do this with pals or on my own. I played rugby for a 42-year stretch that finally ended this year, in one piece – phew! I also love to hang out with my wife, my daughter and two sons, but we are rarely all together, as everyone is grown up and pursuing their own stuff. West Donegal is a favourite spot.

What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

Don't worry about it; it'll work out. And be nice to people.

Who has inspired you?

My dad. He died in 2013 and right to the end, he loved his family, was enthusiastic for life, loved to meet people and do new stuff, and always did what he could to support and encourage life's underdogs.